

## SAUL'S CONVERSION & EARLY MINISTRY (Acts 9:1-31)

*Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem (Acts 9: 1-2).*

Saul was so filled with hatred that he breathed out murder. His hatred was legal. He had authority to kill.

Damascus was a central hub of travel and business from Jerusalem to the rest of the world.

*Why was this an important place for the sake of the Gospel?*

Looking at Acts 9, we see 6 great truths.

**1. There is a reason why believers should never \_\_\_\_\_.**

God and Satan are in a war against each other. Believers are in between. Both God and Satan work through key people. Satan's greatest human worker was Saul. In contrast, the apostles and deacons were key workers for God.

**Twelve things that enabled Paul to be an effective missionary**

<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Scriptures</b>
He learned the Jewish language and culture well.	Acts 21:40 Philippians 3:5
He learned the Greek language and culture well.	Acts 17:22-31 Titus 1:12
He was a Roman citizen.	Acts 16:37; 22:23-29; 25:10-12
He was trained in Jewish theology.	Galatians 1:14
He learned to make tents and support himself.	Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 9:14-18; 2 Cor. 11:7-11; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8
He was called by God.	Acts 9:15-16; 22:14-15; 26:12-18; Rom. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:1 (and others)
He was filled with the Spirit.	Acts 9:17
He was given great grace.	1 Cor. 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9
He was given a thorn in the flesh that kept him humble and dependent on Jesus.	2 Cor. 12:7-9
He had a great love for people.	Rom. 9:1-4; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; Phil. 4:1
He had the heart of a servant.	Acts 21:17-26; 2 Cor. 6:3-10; 9:19-23; Gal. 2:2
He was diligent and persevered to run his race.	1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 11:23-33; Phil. 3:13-14

Believers should never despair. God plans far ahead. The Church would fail if it depended on humans. But God has promised to build His Church (Matt. 16: 18).

**2. Christianity is more than an experience. It is \_\_\_\_\_!**

**3. Whoever persecutes a believer persecutes \_\_\_\_\_.**

*“He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ” (Acts 9: 4).*

Believers also need to learn this truth. Those who gossip about or slander a believer sin against Jesus. Those who refuse to forgive a believer refuse to forgive Jesus. Some were not aware that they met angels (Heb. 13: 2).

**D. New believers need to be connected with \_\_\_\_\_.**

*In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying" (Acts 9: 10-11).*

The meeting of Saul and Ananias served at least two purposes.

First, Ananias became a witness that Saul was blind and was healed. No one's testimony is valid without others who confirm it. Ananias had a good reputation. *"A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there" (Acts 22: 12).*

Second, Saul learned his first lesson about relating to other believers. It was Ananias who prayed for Saul, baptized him, and fed him. Believers need each other!

- Ear and eye (1 Cor. 12:14-20)
- Barnabas (Acts 9:26-27)
- Disciples in Damascus (Acts 9:19) **E. Saul was baptized in water and the Spirit.**

**F. Persuading requires more study than telling.**

*"At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God" (Acts 9: 20).*

Saul began to preach at once. Preach is the Greek word that means "to tell."

*Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him (Acts 9: 22-23).*

Saul became more powerful. How? He did this by studying the Scriptures and by praying. Study was one of the keys to his ministry. Luke does not take the time to tell us about Paul's studying. But Paul himself reveals this to us.

*Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days (Gal. 1: 17-18).*

Every believer is a witness. But there is a great need for all believers to prove truth from the Bible. This ability increases only through Bible study. Jude tells us to *"fight hard for the faith God gave his holy people"* (Jude 3, NCV).

**Homework:**

1. Give 2 reasons why God sent Ananias to Saul.
2. Why are you studying this course?